



What's in the Leaf Litter?

Background:

Any group of organisms of the same species which lives in the same place at a particular time is called a **population**. Populations can rise and fall in number due to new members being born, old members dying, or individuals moving into or out of it. When conditions are favourable the population will tend to increase.

It is the amount of organisms in one particular spot that we are interested in this prac. We can measure population density by finding the number of individuals in a given area.

Aim:

To find the density of insects in a given area of the school grounds.
To discover the wide variety of organisms that occupy one habitat.

Method:

1. **Before** investigating the mulch heap, decide on the following, record your answers.
 - What unit of measurement will you use for recording the density of insects?
 - What is the best way to **collect** your data?
 - What is the best way to **record** your data?
 - Will you repeat your measurements to get a larger sample size and more accurate results?
 - Do you think you would be able to calculate the total number of insects in the mulch?
2. With the class go to the mulch area, and **carefully** begin your **observations** and **measurements**.
3. **Record** all the **different** types of insects you discover at particular **depths** in the mulch layers. Simple sketches will be suitable.

Results:

Use plain paper to draw sketches of the insects you find at different layers.
Use a table to record the amount of insects at particular layers of the mulch.

Discussion:

1. How did the number of insects differ from layer to layer
2. How did the variety of insects differ from layer to layer?
3. Did some insects appear at all depths of the mulch?
4. What do you think the insects feed off in the mulch
5. Was the mulch wet or dry? Explain
6. What factor/s in the surrounding environment could cause the number of insects to decrease? Explain

